

Teri Reitz

From: John Ostlund
Sent: Thursday, May 14, 2020 2:20 PM
To: BOCC; Jeff Martin; Teri Reitz; Erica Wiley; Jeff Slavick; Jeana Lervick
Subject: Fwd: County Facebook

This is a report I asked for on Facebook use in Counties

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: Dani Blain <dblain@co.yellowstone.mt.gov>
Date: May 14, 2020 at 10:16:38 AM MDT
To: John Ostlund <jostlund@co.yellowstone.mt.gov>
Subject: County Facebook

Good Morning John,

I have looked into Montana counties that have Facebook pages, there are six counties: Gallatin County, Lake County, Lewis and Clark County, Missoula County, Petroleum County, and Pondera County. I have spoken with 3 of these counties, Gallatin County, Lake County, and Petroleum County and they all manage their pages differently. Gallatin County's page is called Gallatin County Government. The county is one of three counties in Montana that has a communication coordinator, along with Missoula County and Lewis and Clark County, who runs the County Commissioner's Facebook page and handles other communication issues. In Gallatin County they use a service called Archive Social to archive all their social media posts to preserve the public record. Gallatin County gives management of the page to one person, in their case the Communication's coordinator, who then moderates the page. Gallatin County allows comments on their post but has a social media policy that they created with their County Attorney's office that lets people know inappropriate or offensive comments will be deleted. They sometimes respond to direct questions (i.e. what time something is at), but it is not often. The management of the Facebook page can be as time consuming as you want it to be, initially it is a bit more time consuming as you build a following but soon it takes about an hour a week to schedule all the posts. Recommendations from Gallatin County communication coordinator are to post everyday or at least frequently, so the page is useful, and people want to follow it. She also recommended letting county employees know it exists so that they can like and share it with friends and tagging and sharing other county Facebook page posts to increase the page's following. Overall, the county commissioners love the page, they like that they can easily get information out to the public, like road closures, alerts, or the commission's agenda.

Lake County Commissioners also love their Facebook page. Their page is called Lake County, Montana, like Gallatin County, Lake County uses the company Archive Social to preserve their Facebook posts. Unlike Gallatin County, Lake County did not create a specific job to run their Facebook page, rather one person in each department has access to the page, in the County Commissioner's office the executive assistant has the access to post and the county commissioners send her what they would like posted. I spoke with the executive assistant, she finds the upkeep of the page is minor, the page itself has caused no problems, and the office finds

it very useful. The Commissioner's really enjoy the page, they put out their weekly schedule and other updates, they find it is a common way people communicate so it is a free, easy way to keep up communications with the public. In Lake County, all county Facebook pages are set up by the county IT department, I spoke with IT and they have had no problems with their County Commissioner page, but they have had issues with their Sheriff's page. The Sheriff's page was getting many inappropriate comments so IT used a Facebook filter on the comments that still allowed people to comment, but all comments were hidden, only the manager of the page and the person commenting could see the comments

Petroleum County's Facebook page is very casual, each department head has access to the page, and can post public info like minutes. Petroleum County is a small county, so they have a loose policy to their Facebook, they do not get many comments so responding is not an issue. The County Commissioners like the page, as they also find it a useful way to get information out.

After speaking with these counties, I think there are three main points. First, the use of an archiving service or finding some other way to archive the posts seems important. Archive Social is a paid service, I am unsure if there is a different way to archive social media posts, but two of the counties I spoke with felt that they had to archive social media posts to comply with Montana law. Second, all county commissioner pages in Montana allow comments, but if this is an issue for Yellowstone County there is a Facebook filter that would allow comments but not discussions. Third, of the counties I spoke with, none report the Facebook page is a problem or creates too much work. Rather they all enjoy it and find it easy to manage. Lake County's method of assigning one person to manage the County Commissioner page and then the commissioners sending posts to that person does seem to streamline the process. Let me know if there is anything further you would like me to look into!

Thanks,
Dani